

Village of Rhinebeck Zoning Law Revision

Adopted by the village board in 2001, the Village of Rhinebeck Zoning Law Revision was a community project whose goal was to achieve a zoning code that would allow the village to successfully follow through with and enact the intent of its master plan.

After the Village of Rhinebeck's Master Plan was updated in 1993, the need to update the zoning law became apparent. The citizen volunteers and Village personnel that administered the zoning code, along with the development community, had patiently struggled with a code that ostensibly prevented new development consistent with the historic character of the Village of Rhinebeck.



The new zoning code allows for the creative continuation of the historic, neo-traditional character of the Village of Rhinebeck.



Signage is one of the streetscape components addressed in the village zoning law.

Over a two-year period, the zoning commission and Behan Planning Associates, LLC conducted an exhaustive review and debate over the substance of the local zoning law. The process started with a review of the visions, goals, and major recommendations of the Rhinebeck Master Plan. Those ideas were effectively translated from the plan to zoning regulations – and became a foundation for the zoning code revision.

In addition, public input was solicited at three different community workshops and two public hearings. After reviewing the community input, the commission members contributed their opinions. The existing zoning code was then examined to identify sections that were consistent with the master plan and with the changes sought by the community and the commission.

The revised zoning law uses some of the content of the previously existing code, however, it differs in its philosophy towards zoning. The philosophy of the previously existing code was a rigid, blind, 1950s cookie-cutter approach that is inconsistent with the 1993 Rhinebeck Master Plan and the expressed desires of the community at the public workshops. The revised law is more flexible and is predominantly consistent with the 1993 master plan's philosophy. Each section of the revised zoning law is based on a set of principles and performance standards that respect Rhinebeck's historic character.



Behan Planning Associates, LLC helped the village find solutions to parking availability and administration issues through zoning code strategies.

Significant new features of the revised zoning law are: replacement of four similar residential districts with one Residential district; replacement of a fragmented general business district with a Village Center district and a Gateway Business district; changing the Land Conservation district to an overlay district that allows the underlying uses, with some restrictions, but that is significantly expanded to include all parcels affected by the 100-year

floodplain.

In addition, the Rhinebeck revised zoning law now has a Special Sensitivity Overlay that allows for economic growth while respecting the historic character that makes the Village of Rhinebeck special. The existing parking problem and the administration of such was afforded a solution in the revised zoning law through the creation of broad use categories with flexible ranges, an in-lieu fee option, and a bonus for public access.

Also, the relationship between the Zoning Board of Appeals and the Planning Board was clarified through the revised zoning law. Under the revised code, the planning board and the zoning board have appeals have separate (but related) functions, eliminating the overlap in the previously existing code.